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THE CONDOR

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Western Ornithology

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EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

Contributors to THE CONDOR will doubtless wish to avail themselves of any opportunity of improving their literary out-put. To this end we would recommend securing and *studying* a pamphlet recently issued from the University of California Press under the experienced authorship of the Manager, Mr. Albert H. Allen. The title, "Suggestions on the preparation of manuscript", indicates the scope. As long as surplus copies are in stock each applicant may secure one by sending a two-cent stamp with his request to the University of California Press, Berkeley.

During a recent trip through southern California, the Editor visited the home of Mr. W. Lee Chambers, one of the Business Managers of the Cooper Club. Of great interest there, was the admirable system with which the Club's property and financial affairs are handled. The greatest of scrupulosity is observed in accounting for every item. Back numbers of CONDORS and AVIFAUNAS, amounting to *tons*, are housed in an isolated fire-proof building, the re-

serve supply carefully wrapped so as to escape injury from dust and dampness, and everything card-indexed to the very last copy. An exact accounting of Club funds, as derived from dues and subscriptions, can be ascertained from the card files any day in the year. The attention of both Mr. Law and Mr. Chambers is now concentrated upon ways and means to expand the publication-capacity of the Club, in other words, upon enlargement of THE CONDOR and more frequent additions to the AVIFAUNA series.

During the greater part of the past year the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology has been conducting field work upon the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians of the Yosemite region of the Sierra Nevada. The objects of this work have been twofold: First, to make a detailed and comparative faunal study along a definite cross-section of the central Sierra Nevada from the San Joaquin Valley base to Mono Lake; and second, to provide material to be used as basis of a semi-popular account of the vertebrate natural history of Yosemite National Park.

Under the first head, maps, photographs and large collections of specimens have been assembled, from which to determine the nature and extent of the life zones of the region, and to define the systematic status and inter-relationships of the various constituent vertebrate species.

Under the second head, much information has been gathered concerning the life-histories of the conspicuous species, particularly birds and mammals, and the relations of these to Park conditions from the standpoint of the nature-loving visitor. The principle is evident, that the animal life of any Federal Reservation is an important asset, to be considered as such along with the forests, lakes, water-falls and sculptured cliffs. The birds and mammals should be conserved in maximum numbers, as valuable elements going to make up the sum-total of attractiveness.

The Yosemite National Park is visited by thousands of people each year, a certain portion of whom would find, in an appropriately compiled account of its natural history, a guide and incentive to pleasurable observation of its animal life. An increasing number of people are turning their attention at vacation time toward out-of-door bird-study. In fact there is a distinct tendency to be observed among educated classes, to include a first-hand knowledge of the higher vertebrates among those accomplishments the possession of which denotes intellectual refinement.

To meet and promote the above tendency, and to emphasize an important National Park asset, were the considerations which prompted the undertaking here outlined. The Yosemite Natural History Survey, together with compilation of results, is being

conjointly carried on by Joseph Grinnell, Walter P. Taylor, and Tracy I. Storer, staff-members of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, assisted by several graduate students from the natural science departments of the University of California and of Stanford University. These assistants included Charles L. Camp, Charles D. Holliger and Gordon F. Ferris. In addition, Mr. Joseph Dixon, who has recently joined the staff of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, spent some weeks in the field during the late fall. The expenses of the work are being defrayed in major part from private sources, most notably through special gift from Miss Annie M. Alexander. This benefactor is thus to be credited with actuating much of the natural history fieldwork now going on in California.

The Editor was recently privileged to look over the private collections of Mr. Donald R. Dickey of Pasadena and was astonished at their extent and especially the great care displayed in their preparation and housing. These collections consisted not only of study-skins of birds and mammals, but also of large series of high-class photographs, betokening great patience and ingenuity in field-work. Truly excellent *autochrome* pictures of *living* birds marked the latest advance in the art of photography. Numbers of reels of movies, taken of both birds and mammals, showed the highest degree of perfection in this difficult field. Yet, withal, Mr. Dickey's modesty has thus far retarded publication of most of his work. We have reason to believe, however, that before long through certain channels bird students will come to know of Mr. Dickey's work to their distinct benefit and enjoyment.

In a recent paper published in the *Ottawa Naturalist* (vol. XXIX, 1915, pp. 14-18, 21-28), Mr. P. A. Taverner sets forth some very sound principles of ornithological practice. His title, "Suggestions for ornithological work in Canada", would appear to indicate restriction in scope; but, in fact, the ideas are in large measure applicable in any country. Two or three paragraphs may be quoted here as samples of the sane things said.

"There is also a sentiment against the scientist collecting 'rare birds' on the supposition that if these were allowed to breed they would become common. There are practically no birds, but game, raptorial and plumage forms, that suffer systematic persecution. The number of small or rare birds that are killed by human agencies, except for profit or food, is on the average negligible. Are there a dozen people in Canada, seeking or hunting for Cory's Least Bittern? How many would know one if they saw it? The species has had hundreds of generations in which to become common; if they are rare now it is due to the action of still operating natural causes. The rari-

ty of a creature not especially or generally hunted for profit is an indication that it is not adapted to conditions and is nearing extinction through natural causes. Rarity obviously just precedes extinction."

"It must be borne in mind that our bird population is limited by natural conditions. In most cases this limit was reached long ago, and no more birds can inhabit North America than can find support during the season of least food supply. In a normal or stationary population, the death rate must equal the birth rate or else the population ceases to be stationary. The breeding season increases the population enormously and one way or another this increase must be, and is, reduced to the smaller supporting power of the land through winter.

"It is evident that this allows of a considerable margin of reduction and shows that even quite considerable numbers can be destroyed without interfering with the ultimate numbers of the population and that the comparatively few individuals taken by collectors cannot have an appreciable effect upon their number."

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

WILD BIRD GUESTS | how to entertain them | with chapters on the destruction of birds | their economic and aesthetic values | suggestions for dealing with their | enemies, and on the organiza- | tion and management of | bird clubs | By ERNEST HAROLD BAYNES | with 50 photogravure illustrations | from photographs | New York | E. P. Dutton & Company | 1915 | . Pp. xviii+326, unnumbered plates as above. (\$2.00.)

The author and publishers are to be congratulated on the production of this remarkable book. The reader at once receives an impression of high quality, to which a number of factors are contributory. Among these is the artistic make-up of the book. The typography could hardly be improved upon, and the photogravures, many of which are of living birds or mammals, are excellent. The personality of the author himself is without doubt a large element of attraction. Especially worthy of remark are his modesty, and his cordial appreciation of the work of others in behalf of conservation.

Indicative of his quality of appreciation of the contributions of other workers are the following quotations (pp. 310, 311): "The author . . . proffers his thanks . . . to none more gratefully than to those scientific men in Washington and elsewhere, upon whose patient, accurate, but often unappreciated work, some of the strongest pleas for bird conservation are based." "When an unbiased history of American wild bird conservation is written, there will be few names which stand out with greater prominence than that of Edward Howe Forbush, who never pauses in his work to tell the world that it is he who is doing it."